



PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

Fort Benning, GA

(706) 545-3512 / 545-2211

FORT BENNING – A new fitness center named for an Operation Iraqi Freedom Medal of Honor recipient will be dedicated and officially opened during a ribbon cutting ceremony at 11 a.m. June 29.

The Smith Fitness Center is named for Sgt. First Class Paul Ray Smith a combat engineer assigned to the 11th Engineer Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division, who sacrificed all in April 2003.

The new fitness center is a 101,000 square foot, two-story facility featuring state-of-the-art equipment and amenities. It houses a zero-depth entry leisure pool and a 25-meter lap lane pool, a whirlpool spa, a rock climbing wall and tower, three regulation basketball courts, two racquetball courts and 20,000 square feet of exercise and training rooms for cardiovascular and weight training.

The facility is located on main post adjacent to Stewart-Watson Field.

Smith was awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously at a White House ceremony on April 4, 2005.

While constructing a prisoner of war holding area near the Baghdad International Airport on April 4, 2003, Smith's task force was attacked by a larger enemy force. Smith organized a defense, then braved hostile enemy fire to organize the evacuation of three wounded Soldiers from a badly damaged armored personnel carrier.

Smith then engaged the attacking force, firing a .50 caliber machine gun that was mounted on a damaged vehicle. Forced to fire from an exposed position, Smith was mortally wounded. His heroic actions, under withering enemy fire, helped defeat the enemy attack and allowed the safe withdrawal of wounded American Soldiers.

Smith is survived by his wife, Birgit, and two children.

For more information, call the Public Affairs Office at (706) 545-3512.

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Home of the Infantry - Future Home of the Maneuver Center